

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

On page 1, immediately after the title, please insert the following paragraph and heading as follows:

This specification for the instant application should be granted the priority date of December 18, 2002, the filing date of the corresponding German patent application 102 59 378.7, as well as the priority date of November 28, 2003, the filing date of the corresponding International patent application PCT/EP03/013386.

Background of the Invention.

On page 2, line 3, please insert the following heading:

--Summary of the Invention--

On page 10, before line 1, please insert the following heading:

--Brief Description of the Drawings--

On page 11, line 7, please insert the following heading:

--Description of Specific Embodiments--

On page 13, line 1 through page 14, line 9, please amend this paragraph as follows:

In the starting position, the stack of plates 2, i.e. the lowest plate thereof, rests upon the rests 3, as is best seen in Figures 1 and 2. In this state, the lifting device 5 is raised so that the plate seating means 6 engages under the lowest plate in the stack of plates 2 and thereby raises the entire stack of plates 2 so that it no longer rests on the rests 3. Thereafter, the plate seating means 6 - and thus the entire stack of plates - is rotated in one direction of rotation by means of the pneumatic cylinder 10, the rail 11 and the arm 12, as is indicated by the arrow 16. Since the vertical cam profile 14 of the plate supporting device 4 rests against the horizontal cam profile 13 and the plate seating means 6 due to the weight 15, the rest 3 will be pressed outwardly in the course of this rotation due to the radial camming action of the horizontal cam profile 13 so that the rest 3 is no longer situated within range of the stack of plates 2. In this state, the lifting

device 5 together with the plate seating means 6 is lowered so that, in the position to which it has previously been rotated, the horizontal cam profile 13 slides downwardly on the vertical cam profile 14 of the plate supporting device, as is best seen in Figures 4 and 5. The vertical cam profile ~~45~~14 has a perpendicular profiled portion 17 and an S-shaped profiled portion 18 which adjoins the perpendicular profiled portion 17 at the lower end thereof. When the lifting device 5 is lowered, the horizontal cam profile 13 slides on the vertical cam profile 14, initially perpendicularly downwards along the perpendicular profiled portion 17 and then on the adjoining S-shaped profiled portion 18 whose spacing from the central axis of the lifting device 5 increases in the downward direction. Consequently, the lowest plate in the stack of plates arrives at a position below the rest 3 which then re-enters the region covered by the stack of plates below the next higher plate due to the curvature of the S-shaped profiled portion 18. The remaining stack of plates is re-seated on the rest 3 when the plate seating means 6 is lowered still further. The lifting device 5 continues to be driven downwardly and the plate 9 that has been extracted from the stack of plates is deposited on the conveyor belt 8.

On page 14, line 11 through page 15, line 8, please amend this paragraph as follows:

The process of inserting a plate into a stack of plates runs in the reverse order to the previously described sequence for extracting a plate therefrom. The plate seating means 6, which is located below the conveyor belt 8 in the basic position, is raised by the lifting device 5, lifts up the plate 9 that is to be inserted from the conveyor belt 8 and raises it under the stack of plates 1. As the lifting device 5 is raised still further, the stack of plates 1 is lifted up over the plate 9 that is to be inserted so that the stack of plates 1 is freed from the rest 3 of the plate supporting device 4. The horizontal cam profile 13, which slides on the vertical cam profile ~~45~~14 in the course of this raising process, presses the rest 3 outwardly due to the camming action of the vertical cam ~~45~~14, i.e. due to the S-shaped profiled portion 18, so that the plate 9 that is to be inserted can be raised upwardly past the rest 3. In this state, the plate seating means 6 is

rotated in the opposite direction to that of the arrow 16 so that the vertical cam profile ~~45~~14 slides on the horizontal cam profile 13. Since the radius of the horizontal cam profile 13 becomes smaller with respect to the axis of rotation during the rotational process, the rest 3 re-enters the region covered by the stack of plates and moves below the plate that is to be inserted, which is now the lowest plate in the stack of plates. By lowering the lifting device 5, the stack of plates is seated once again on the rest 3 and thus the process of inserting a plate 9 into the stack of plates I is terminated.

On page 16, after line 22, please insert the following two new paragraphs:

--The specification incorporates by reference the disclosure of German priority document 102 59 378.7 filed December 18, 2002 and PCT/EP03/013386 filed November 28, 2003.

The present invention is, of course, in no way restricted to the specific disclosure of the specification and drawings, but also encompasses any modifications within the scope of the appended claims.--

In addition, please add the following abstract to the specification.